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THE STATUS REPORT

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MCSW Endorses Senate Paid Family & Medical Leave Bill

When the hearing on Senate President Travaglini's "Strong Families Act Providing Family and Medical Leave" S2535, is held on June 8, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women will be one of many organizations giving testimony in support of the bill.

"This legislation is hugely beneficial to the women of Massachusetts," said Commission Chair Kathy Casavant. "Women, who are the primary caretakers, are in the workplace as never before. They should not be made to choose between doing what is needed to care for themselves or their families and their paycheck."

The Hearing will take place in front of two committees – the Joint Committees on Children and Families, Chaired by Senator Karen Spilka, and on Labor and Workforce Development, Chaired by Senator Thomas McGee. If enacted, S.2535 would provide eligible employees up to 12 weeks of job protected leave to recover from their own serious illness or injury or that of a child, spouse or parent, or to care for a newborn, recently adopted or new foster child.

Eligible employees will get 100 percent of their weekly earnings up to a cap of up to \$750 during the job-protected leave. The benefit would be funded by employees via a payroll contribution to a newly established Strong Families Trust Fund. It is estimated that the average contribution will be \$2.50 per week, with a minimum wage worker paying less than a \$1 per week.

"Giving workers time to care and providing financial security when they need time off has proven to be good for employees and their families, AND good for business. It provides employee peace of mind and security, which translates to improved

worker morale, productivity and loyalty to their employer. This can help decrease employee turnover," Chair Casavant added.

This bill will improve the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) as it will provide PAID leave and applies to employers of all sizes. It expands eligibility to those who have worked for an employer for nine months and 900 hours. The FMLA allows eligible employees to take 12 weeks or less leave as unpaid. Additionally, the law only applies to employers with 50 or more employees who must have work 1,250 hours in the previous 12-month period to qualify.

State-expanded paid family and medical leave will address the following:

- Sixty four percent of workers who need family or medical leave do not take it because they cannot afford time off without pay.
- More than 40% of the private-sector's workforce is not covered by the FMLA because they work for employers not covered under the law.
- Only about 12 percent of companies offer paid maternity leave and about 7 percent offer paid paternity leave.
- Twenty one percent of low-income workers who do not take some leave must turn to welfare for support.

Continued on Pg. 3

Inside This Issue	
Executive Director Corner	2
MCSW Call to Action	3
Commissioner Cavaioli Receives Community Leadership Award	4
National Association of Commissions for Women	4
Upcoming Noteworthy Events & Happenings	5

Executive Director Corner

Last week 63.4 million votes - more than any president has ever received - were cast in search of a new "American Idol." I frankly find this appalling and wonder what it says about the current state of our country and what we care about. As someone who is passionate about getting women to exercise their hard won right to vote, and hopefully electing more women leaders with those votes, I find this disconnect between real world political reality and television reality programming both alarming and extremely difficult to fathom.

The staff and I discussed it this week, along with the fabulous group of young women who are interning with us for the summer, and several theories arose. One recent graduate attributes these results to the current lack of civics education – where students at a young age learn the foundation and fundamentals of our government, including such things as principles of democracy, American Government and economics, good citizenship and values, the importance of community service, etc.

Along these lines, another cited the absence of good parental and other role models who discuss news and politics in the home or classroom and instill in their children or charges the importance of being active, engaged and voting members of society.

Another felt that it may be more overwhelming and difficult, even paralyzing, to engage in something that really matters – such as voting for a president instead of the next singing sensation.

Lastly, the general voter apathy and political disconnectedness that today runs so rampant was noted, particularly in terms of voters not realizing how their vote – and the wheels it puts in motion – personally impacts their lives.

To not dwell on the negative, what can we learn from American Idol?

We can learn that people WILL vote – if they feel passionate about something. It makes us realize we have much more work to do to educate women that it is their responsibility to be knowledgeable and engaged in the government that offers them the greatest opportunity in the world for freedom and individual success. We need to do a better job of illustrating how voting and civic engagement have a direct and very personal effect on one's life.

And perhaps most importantly, we need to continually remember that it is the collective power of women's voices that will create true change. Women comprise over half the population of this state. If they can mobilize around one thing – anything – just think of the result! Maybe it's voting, electing more women to office, or demanding equal pay for equal work. Women of Massachusetts have power – they just need to claim it and collectively utilize it. We will continue our efforts to move them in this direction...and leave reality TV for others.

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"There cannot be true democracy unless women's voices are heard."

~ Hillary Rodham Clinton

Paid Family & Medical Leave Continued from Pg. 1

S.2535 will also establish a Massachusetts Work-Family Council within the Executive Office of Economic Development. According to the proposed legislation, "The Council shall develop broadly shared understandings of critical work-family issues in the Commonwealth, and shall promote through privately funded research, experimentation, and education both responsive public policies and innovative private sector practices."

The Commission's vote on endorsing this legislation was eight in favor, three opposed and one abstention.

MCSW CALL TO ACTION!! We Need Your Organization's Help!

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women announces the imminent launch of the MASSACHUSETTS WOMEN'S RESOURCE & REFERRAL NETWORK

The network is an interactive online database that will put information, services, agencies, and organizations that Massachusetts women and their families need at their fingertips!

We need your help in identifying local service providers and women's organizations to include in the network.

Make sure your organization is represented.

Enter your organizations information directly at www.mass.gov/women/addmyorg.htm
or call us at 617-626-6520

Commission Corner

Commissioner Cavaioli Receives Community Leadership Award

Congratulations to MCSW Commissioner Linda A. Cavaioli, Executive Director of the Worcester YWCA, who was recently honored with the Orville Harrold Community Leadership Award for her commitment and service to the Central Massachusetts community.

She was selected for visibly embracing the five values for which Orville was well known: action, involvement, persistence and determination, humor, and insight. Her nominator wrote, "Linda embodies each of these values in her service, commitment, and passion for the community. One may say that she accomplishes more in one day, than any of us may in a week."

This honor is the latest of many Cavaioli has received for her community leadership and involvement. In addition to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, Linda serves on many local, regional and national boards. Cavaioli was appointed to the MCSW by Senate President Robert Travaglini.

The MCSW Welcomes Two New Commissioners

The MCSW would like to welcome two new commissioners, Erika Ebbel of Cambridge and Ellen Calmas of Chestnut Hill, who were appointed by Governor Romney.

National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW)

The MCSW is a proud member of the NACW, a professional organization for over 220 commissions for women who are committed to equality and justice for women, providing support and expertise and serving as their national voice.

NACW is the national advocate for government commissions for women, which holds a unique and positive position for women's equity and justice and touches millions of women, playing a significant role in national policy and legislative development.

The NACW Officers and Board of Directors will host the 37th Annual Convention of the National Association of Commissions for Women in Lincoln, Nebraska from July 19-22, 2006. This year's theme is Making it Real; Respect Equality Achievement Leadership. For more information, visit their Web site www.nacw.org



"Women, who are the primary caretakers, are in the workplace as never before. They should not be made to choose between doing what is needed to care for themselves or their families and their paycheck."

~Kathleen Casavant, MCSW Chair speaking about SENATE Bill No. 2536, Paid Family & Medical Leave

Upcoming Noteworthy Events & Happenings

⇒ June 6, 12:00 Noon – 2:00 p.m. <u>YWCA Boston's 12th Annual Women's Leadership Event</u>

To be held at the Sheraton Boston Hotel. For more information, call 617-585-5480

⇒ June 14, 5:30 p.m. <u>MWPC's Nineteenth Annual Tribute to Abigail Adams</u>
To be held at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel, Boston, MA.
To RSVP, or for more information, visit www.mwpc.com

⇒ June 20, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. *Jane Doe Inc. 2006 Annual Conference*

Tools You Can Use: Exploring Innovations in our Work to End Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence. To be held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, Marlborough, MA. For more information, or to register, visit www.janedoe.org

⇒ June 23, Noon-1:00 p.m. Financial Planning: Saving for Retirement

Sponsored by State Treasurer Tim Cahill & The Caucus of Women Legislators' Mentoring Program Committee. To be held at the MA State House, House Members' Lounge, 3rd FL. Space is limited, so registration is required. Light refreshments will be provided. To RSVP, or for more information, call Cynthia at 617-367-6900, or e-mail Cynthia at cgibbons@tre.state.ma.us

Commission Officers & Members FY 2006

Kathleen Casavant, Chair, Chelsea

Ellen Calmas, Chestnut Hill Linda Cavaioli, Worcester

Gloria Coney, Roxbury

Lianne Cook, Salem

Helen Corbett, Danvers

Erika Ebbel, Cambridge

Donna Finneran, Mattapan

Marianne Fleckner, Westford

Mary Grant, PhD, North Adams

Catherine Greene, Esq., Secretary, Brighton

Elizabeth Houlihan, Vice-Chair, Falmouth

Helen Jackson, MD, W. Roxbury

Judith Kurland, Brookline

Roseanna Means, MD, Wellesley

Angela Menino, Hyde Park

Carol Pimentel, New Bedford

Susana Segat, Cambridge

Greer Tan Swiston, Treasurer, Newton

If you have an event that you would like added to our future newsletters, or Web site, please e-mail the information to:

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Commission Staff & Interns

Linda Brantley, Executive Director Paula Daddona, Program Manager Jill Ashton, Outreach Coordinator Darlene Kelter, Administrative Assistant

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

VISIT US AT:

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